

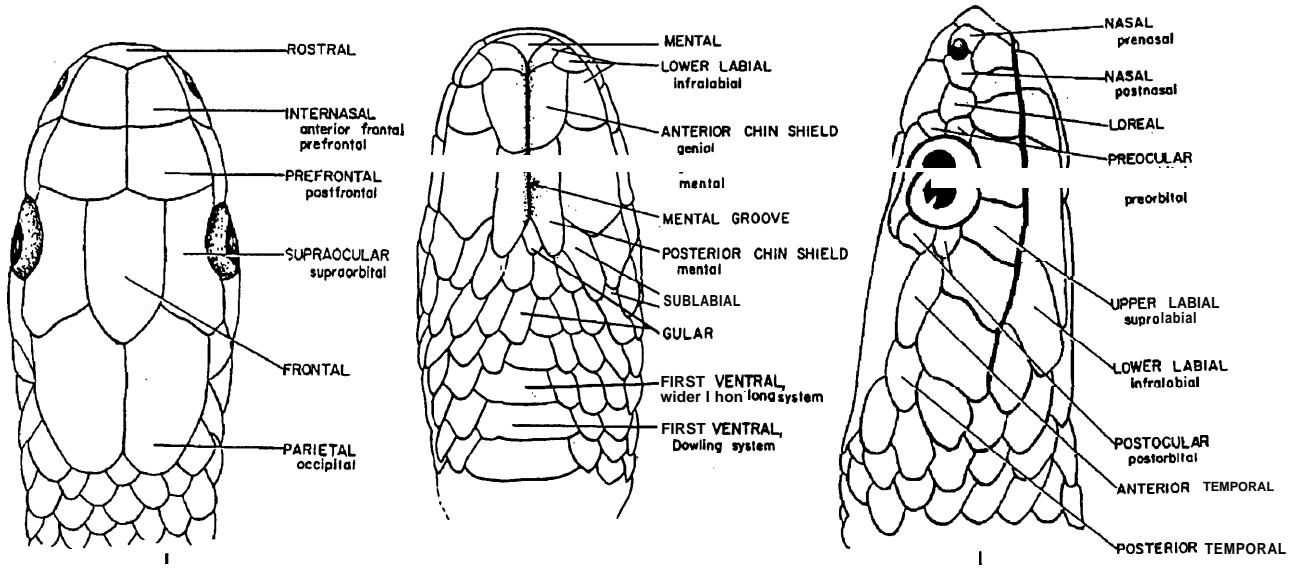
Identification Notes for wildlife law enforcement

CATEGORY: REPTILE

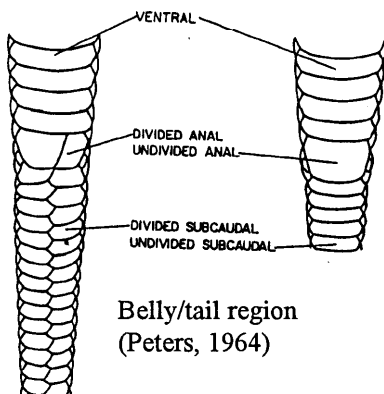
Snake scales: nomenclature and counting methods

PROBLEM:

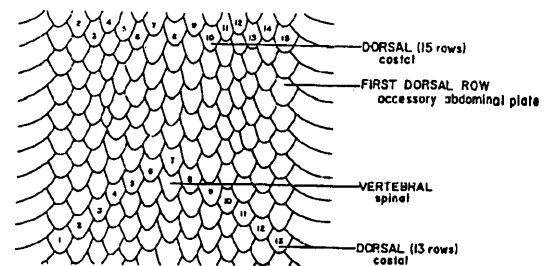
Whole **animal** keys and identification guides often refer to scale characteristics (counts, shapes, etc.). Below is a guide to scale location on many, but not all, snakes; most frequently used **nomenclature** is provided. When scale counts are presented as xx-xx-xx: the first number is the number of scales one head's length behind the head, the second is the number of scales at mid-body (halfway between rear of head and anus) and the third is the number of scales one head's length in front of the anus. When only one number is given it's the mid-body count.



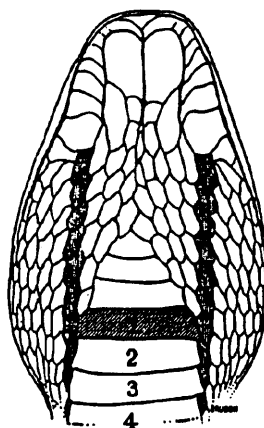
Head scalation (Peters, 1964)



Belly/tail region
(Peters, 1964)



Two methods of counting
dorsal scales (Peters, 1964)



Ventral side of head showing the **first row of dorsals** (darkened area) and the preferred method for determining the first ventral (oblique lines). (Dowling, 1951)

REFERENCES:

Dowling, H. G. 1951. A proposed standard system of counting ventrals in snakes. *Brit. J. Herp.* 1(5): 97-99.
Peters, J.A. 1964. *Dictionary of Herpetology*. Hafner Publ. Co., NY & London.